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ABSTRACT

The Evaluation Department of San Diego (California) City Schools develops and implements an annual evaluation plan aimed at improving special education programs, as required under California's Master Plan for Special Education. The studies contained in the 1986-87 evaluation are presented in three sections: (1) demographic information about the student population, (2) evaluation of the special education referral process, and (3) studies of instruction and services provided in least restrictive environment settings. The demographic section considers numbers of pupils by handicapping categories, instructional settings, racial/ethnic groups, and age groups, as well as the number of decertified pupils in similar categories. The evaluation of the referral process analyzes: the effectiveness of identification, assessment, and eligibility policies and procedures; types of prereferral interventions attempted; and the extent of interagency collaboration. The section on least restrictive environment settings focuses primarily on evaluating an integration pilot project at Perry Elementary School and evaluating the mainstreaming of secondary-level seriously emotionally disturbed pupils. (Author/JDD)

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San Diego City Schools
PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION DIVISION

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SPECIAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

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No. 473

October 6, 1987

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT REPORT

Abstract

Special Education Annual Program Evaluation
October 6, 1987

The evaluation studies contained in the 1986-87 evaluation of the special education program in San Diego (California) City Schools are presented in three sections: 1) demographic information about the student population; 2) evaluation of the special education referral process; and, 3) studies of instruction and services provided in least restrictive environment settings. The report contains the following recommendations: 1) report be shared with the district interdivisional committee on special education; 2) evaluation of the special education identification and assessment process be continued to determine if the recent reorganization has addressed problem areas identified by the evaluation; 3) a pupil-level database be developed which can lead to a more systematic and integrated delivery of intervention services to pupils; 4) superintendent and Board of Education disseminate information about successful practices and programs that merge regular education and special education programs; and, 5) the district study concerns in this report raised about the overrepresentation of Black pupils in special education and prepare a plan to remediate the problem.

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SPECIAL EDUCATION
ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

Prepared by

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Program Evaluator

October 6, 1987

San Diego City Schools
Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division
Evaluation Department
Elizabeth A. Tomblin, Assistant Director

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SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division
Evaluation Department

SPECIAL EDUCATION
ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION STUDY

Executive Summary

October 6, 1987

I. Issue/Concern

Local school districts are required under California's Master Plan for Special Education to develop and implement an annual evaluation plan aimed at improving special education programs. The studies contained in the 1986-87 evaluation of the San Diego City Schools' special education program were divided into three sections: 1) special education population description; 2) identification and assessment process; and, 3) instruction and services in least restrictive environment. The evaluation findings and recommendations from each section are presented in this report.

II. Summary of Findings

Key findings from the annual evaluation of the district's special education program are summarized below.

1. The April 1987 Pupil Count indicated that 11,922 pupils (10.3 percent of the district's enrollment) were served in special education. Pupils with specific learning disabilities comprised 53.9 percent of the special education population; pupils with speech impairments, 18.7 percent; mentally retarded, 6.7 percent; orthopedically handicapped, 5.8 percent; seriously emotionally disturbed, 5.5 percent; and, multi-handicapped, 4.3 percent. Other handicapped groups such as health impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, visually handicapped, and deaf-blind composed the remaining 3.8 percent of special education pupils.

2. A total of 4,288 special education pupils (36.0 percent) received their individualized education programs in special day classes, 4,232 pupils (35.5 percent) in the resource specialist program; 3,159 pupils (26.5 percent) in the designated instruction and services setting; and, 243 pupils (2.0 percent) were enrolled in nonpublic schools.

3. Black pupils, as a group, were overrepresented in special education by 7.2 percent compared to their representative numbers in the district's enrollment. This is at a slightly higher level than reported for the 1985-86 school year. Hispanic and White pupils were overrepresented by one percent each. Asian and Indochinese pupils were under-represented in special education by 5.2 percent compared to their representative numbers in the district's enrollment. Filipino pupils are also underrepresented in special education, but less so than reported for the 1985-86 school year.

4. Seventy-one percent of the special education population was between six and fifteen years of age. The birth to three year old population has increased by 148.4 percent over one year ago and now makes up 2.0 percent of the total special education enrollment. The number of 18 to 22 year old pupils has increased by 96.8 percent of the past year.

5. Between September 1986 and June 1987, 197 pupils in the resource specialist program were exited (decertified) from special education. This represents 4.7 percent of the 4,201 specific learning disabled and mentally retarded pupils served in the resource specialist program. The average age of the decertified pupils was 12 years, 2 months.

6. The median length of time that the decertified pupils spent in special education was 33 months ranging between six to 90 months. Among the racial/ethnic groups, Black pupils spent an average of 39.1 months in special education; Hispanic pupils, 37.9 months; and, White pupils, 35.3 months. This difference was not statistically significant.

7. Seven hundred and seven school site administrators, counselors, and classroom teachers responded to a survey on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team process. Ninety-six percent of the respondents indicated that they understood their role in the IEP team process, and 88 percent indicated the procedure for referring pupils to special education is clear. Eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the IEP team personnel clearly explained their rationale for determining pupils' eligibility for special education. The criteria used to place pupils in the learning handicapped program were the most clearly understood among the respondents, and the criteria for the communicatively handicapped program were the least understood.

8. Sixty-one percent of the survey respondents indicated the IEP team personnel spent the majority of their time on school sites carrying out assessments; 30 percent indicated that the team personnel spent most of their time on sites working with pupils already placed into special education; and, 14 percent indicated that the team personnel spent their time doing preventive work with pupils. Forty-three percent of the survey respondents indicated that they wished to use the expertise of the IEP team members differently than the way they were now used. The counselors were least likely to want changes, and the classroom teachers most likely to want changes.

9. While the IEP team personnel are perceived as a valuable resource at school sites, the survey respondents offered many suggestions for improving the operation of the IEP team process. The ability of staff to respond to pupils' needs in a timely and effective manner was described as constrained by a slow and complex referral process, excessive paperwork, and lengthy meetings involving too many people. Communication difficulties, decision-making that did not involve site staff, and poor coordination among special education, and school sites, and limited access to the psychologist were frequently cited as areas for improvement. Many administrators asked for more site control in determining pupils' eligibility for special education.

10. Seven hundred and thirteen pupils were referred to special education during November 1986 and 645 during March 1987. Two-thirds of the referrals were elementary pupils, and one-third were secondary pupils. First and second graders made up the highest percent of referrals for both months. In November, 50 percent of the special education referrals were also at risk of in grade retention.

11. For the November referrals, a final decision was reached for 275 referrals (43.9 percent) within two months; and, in March, a final decision was reached for 341 referrals (57.6 percent). In 50 percent of these cases, the pupils were placed into special education. In one-third of these cases, the pupils were found to be not eligible for special education. In the remaining cases, the pupils moved out of the district or parents refused to proceed with the assessment or special education placement. A large percent of referrals were still not completed after two months (40.7 percent for November referrals and 35.3 percent for March referrals).

12. Review of referrals made during November 1986 to the seriously emotionally disturbed program indicated that the guidelines put forth by the Special Education Department were being followed. However, the actual implementation including the amount of documentation required and reviews of previous interventions and assessment findings varied. It appeared that secondary school referrals are processed more quickly than referrals from elementary schools.

13. The district made progress in implementing interagency collaboration with Community Mental Health and California Children's Services for related services in counseling, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. By June 1987, 30 elementary and 65 secondary seriously emotionally disturbed pupils, 40 pupils referred from the central assessment team, and pupils in the licensed children's institution program were receiving counseling services through interagency collaboration with Community Mental Health.

14. An integration pilot project for mainstreaming special day class pupils at Perry Elementary School was implemented during 1986-87. On the average, the special day class pupils were spending 25 percent of their school day in regular education classes. The older pupils were showing positive behavior on the playground. The participation of the special day class pupils in the counseling center program increased over the school year. The staff felt positive about the integration project. They stated that improvement was needed in areas related to communication about pupils, class size, and more team teaching. Parents interviewed were unfamiliar with the project but, in general, supported the idea of mainstreaming.

15. Two itinerant teachers coordinated the mainstreaming of seriously emotionally disturbed pupils at the elementary and secondary level. At the secondary level, 25 pupils successfully completed academic and elective coursework at comprehensive middle and senior high school campuses throughout the district.

III. Recommendations For Staff Action

Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the following recommendations for staff action are made.

1. It is recommended that the evaluation report be shared with district's Interdivisional Committee on Special Education.

2. It is recommended that the Special Education Director with the Evaluation Department and representatives from school sites, special education, Community Advisory Committee, and parents determine if the current reorganization of special education effectively addresses concerns raised in this report about the identification and assessment process. It is recommended that biannual reports of the findings be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services and shared with the superintendent and cabinet.

3. It is recommended that the Educational Services Division study the feasibility of developing a pupil-level database containing information on the types of interventions attempted with pupils who have learning difficulties or behavioral problems and on individual pupil outcomes as related to factors such as special education referral, in grade retention, CTBS performance, attendance problems, and suspensions. This database should be structured so that the efficacy of different intervention approaches can be determined. Findings should be used to develop strategies which consolidate intervention efforts; facilitate communication among school sites, departments such as Special Education, Guidance Services, Health Services and Second Language; and, lead to a more systematic, integrated delivery of intervention services to pupils.

4. It is recommended that the superintendent and Board of Education disseminate information about successful practices and programs that effectively merge regular education and special education in order to recognize and encourage initiative and innovation among the school site staffs.

IV. Rationale

The recommendations are based on evaluation findings that resulted from careful study of state reporting forms, student records, reports from the Management Information Systems office, survey data, staff and parent interviews and school site records. Analyses of these data generated the evaluation findings and recommendations. Each recommendation addresses an identified special education program need.

V. Budget Implications

No immediate budgetary implications are foreseen as a result of this evaluation report.

SPECIAL EDUCATION
ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION STUDY

I
ISSUE/CONCERN

Local school districts are required under California's Master Plan for Special Education to develop and implement an annual evaluation plan aimed at improving special education programs. The studies contained in the 1986-87 evaluation of the San Diego City Schools' special education program were divided into three sections: 1) special education population description; 2) identification and assessment process; and, 3) instruction and services in least restrictive environment. The evaluation findings and recommendations from each section are presented in this report.

II
BACKGROUND

The Special Education Department is an administrative unit within the Educational Services Division of San Diego Unified School District and is responsible for the provision of free, appropriate individualized education programs to all handicapped children ages birth to twenty-one years of age. The April 1987 special education enrollment was reported at 11,922 pupils between birth and twenty-one years of age (10.3 percent of the district's pupil enrollment).

The California State Master Plan for Special Education provides the fiscal managment model for special education. The funding sources include federal assistance (Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975), county property tax revenues, average daily attendance revenue limit for special day classes, and the local general fund contribution. The special education apportionment from the state is based on the following: 1) reported cost of operating the district's special education program in the 1979-80 base year with an adjustment for inflation; 2) current service level in terms of instructional personnel, settings operated, and support services; and, 3) total amount received by the district from other sources. The special education budget for 1986-87 was $61,849,000. The federal, state, and local income sources are shown below.

Federal Assistance	$2,532,000
County Tax Revenue	781,000
Special Day Class ADA-Revenue Limit	9,224,000
Mandated Local General Fund Contribution	4,931,000
State Special Education Apportionment	31,655,000
Transportation Apportionment	4,032,000
Additional District Contribution	8,694,000
Total Special Education Budget	$61,849,000

Under California's Master Plan for Special Education, local school districts are required to develop and implement an annual evaluation plan to improve program effectiveness. The 1986-87 evaluation plan was designed to provide evaluative information needed to improve existing programs and report findings to district staff, community audiences, and California State Department of Education.

The 1986-87 evaluation of the district's special education program addressed the questions presented below.

I. **Special Education Population Description**

a. How many pupils were served in special education during 1986-87 by handicapping categories, instructional settings, racial/ethnic groups, and age groups?

b. How many learning handicapped pupils were decertified by racial/ethnic groups, gender, and grade level?

c. How long were the decertified pupils typically enrolled in special education?

II. **Identification and Assessment Process**

a. Did the process by which pupils were identified, assessed, and found eligible for special education operate effectively?

b. Where were strengths and weaknesses identified?

c. How many of the pupils referred for special education were assessed to be eligible by handicapping categories, racial/ethnic groups, language proficiency, and gender?

d. What types of interventions were attempted with pupils prior to referral to special education?

e. How were pupils assessed to be eligible for the seriously emotionally disturbed program?

f. To what extent was there interagency collaboration between the district and California Children's Services and Community Mental Health?

III. **Instruction and Services in the Least Restrictive Environment**

a. Was the integration pilot project at Perry Elementary School successful? What percentage of the special education pupils attended regular education classes for 50 percent or more of the school day?

b. What actions were taken by the school site staff to ensure successful mainstreaming?

c. What areas needed improvement or change?

d. How did the parents view the mainstreaming project?

e. How many pupils were mainstreamed into regular education courses from the two secondary SED sites? What were the factors contributing to successful mainstreaming experiences for the SED pupils who were mainstreamed into regular education courses at secondary schools?

III
EVALUATION DESIGN

The evaluation design was developed in order to provide findings related to description of the special education population, identification and assessment process, and instruction and services in the least restrictive environment. Description information is provided on the special education population in terms of pupils served and those decertified. The Special Education Pupil Count (R30-SE) reports submitted to the California State Department of Education in December 1986 and April 1987 were analyzed to identify students served in special education by handicapping categories, instructional settings, racial/ethnic groups, and different age groups. The Management Information System office in the Special Education Department issued a report of the numbers of learning handicapped students who exited from special education program between September 1986 and June 1987. The report was examined to describe the sample in terms of distribution among racial/ethnic groups, boys and girls, and length of stay in special education including follow-up information on pupils decertified from the severe disorders of language program.

A survey was developed by staff from the Evaluation Department and the Special Education Department to determine the perceptions held by school site administrators, counselors, and selected classroom teachers about the IEP team process as it operated in the district during 1986-87 and to obtain suggestions for improvement. The survey was mailed to all school principals, vice principals, secondary school counselors, and resource specialists along with a random sample of classroom teachers representative of all district elementary schools and special education programs. Of 946 surveys mailed, 707 surveys (75 percent return rate) were completed and returned.

Resource specialists and diagnostic teachers from the special education assessment teams recorded descriptive information pertaining to grade, racial/ethnic group, gender, language proficiency, previous interventions, and disposition on all referrals initiated during the months of November 1986 and March 1987. These two months were selected to be representative by special education assessment staff. For November, resource specialists and diagnostic teachers from all 90 elementary schools and 31 secondary schools returned completed surveys (82.3 percent returned). For March, all completed surveys were returned from 93 elementary schools and 28 secondary and atypical schools (82.3 percent returned). The surveys including the final disposition of each referral were returned within two months following the data collection. The referral procedures and outcomes of 11 pupils referred to the seriously emotionally disturbed program during November 1986 were studied through interviews conducted with district psychologists. An interview was conducted by

the program evaluator with special education program managers to determine the extent of interagency collaboration which occurred during the 1986-87 school year. The latter two items were evaluated in response to recommendations contained in the Special Education Audit, Evaluation Department Report No. 429, June 24, 1986.

An evaluation of the integration and mainstreaming of special education pupils from three special day classes to an elementary school campus was conducted. An integration pilot project was conducted at Perry Elementary School to integrate special day class pupils in kindergarten, and grades one through six into the general education program. The progress of the special education pupils was evaluated using school records on counseling center contacts, disciplinary records, and mainstreaming efforts. Interviews were conducted with the school site administrative staff, resource specialist, and selected classroom teachers to determine the actions taken by the school staff to implement integration of the special day class pupils. Using an open-ended survey format, parents were surveyed regarding their views on the integration efforts. The mainstreaming of seriously emotionally disturbed pupils into comprehensive secondary school campuses was studied through interviews with the itinerant special education teachers who facilitated the mainstreaming program.

IV
FINDINGS

Findings from the evaluation studies are presented in three sections. Section A contains findings describing the pupil population served in special education. Section B summarizes evaluation findings concerning the process by which pupils were identified and assessed to determine their eligibility for special education. Section C presents evaluation findings on the Perry School integration pilot project and mainstreaming to seriously emotionally disturbed pupils to provide instruction and services in the least restrictive environment.

Section A
Description of the Special Education Population

This section contains findings related to the numbers of pupils who were served in special education during the 1986-87 school year by handicapping categories, instructional setting, racial/ethnic groups, and different age groups. The numbers of learning handicapped pupils who were decertified from special education between September 1986 and May 1987 were described in terms of their distribution among different racial/ethnic groups, gender, grade level, and length of stay in special education.

The Special Education Pupil Count (R30-SE) submitted to the California State Department of Education in April 1987 showed that a total of 11,922 pupils, or 10.3 percent of the district's enrollment, was served in special education. This represents an increase of 678 pupils (6.0 percent) over the enrollment reported in December 1986. Table 1 presents the April 1987 pupil enrollments reported by handicapping categories.

- Pupils who met the state eligibility criteria for special learning disabled composed the largest group, 53.9 percent, in special education.
- Pupils who met the state eligibility criteria for speech impaired composed the second largest group or 18.7 percent.
- Other large groups in special education were as follows: mentally retarded (6.7 percent); orthopedically handicapped (5.8 percent); seriously emotionally disturbed (5.5 percent); and, multi-handicapped (4.3 percent).
- Groups composing less than two percent of the special education population were other health impaired (1.9 percent), deaf and hard of hearing (1.3 percent each), visually handicapped (0.5 percent), and deaf-blind (0.1 percent).

TABLE 1
SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENTS
BY HANDICAPPING CATEGORIES*

Handicapping Categories	Enrollment	Percent
Specific Learning Disabled (SLD)	6,417	53.9
Speech Impaired (SI)	2,226	18.7
Mentally Retarded (MR)	805	6.7
Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)	693	5.8
Seriously Emotionally Disturbed (SED)	659	5.5
Multi-Handicapped (MH)	512	4.3
Other Health Impaired (OHI)	220	1.9
Deaf	164	1.3
Hard of Hearing (HH)	154	1.3
Visually Handicapped (VH)	66	0.5
Deaf-Blind (DB)	6	0.1
TOTAL	11,922	100.0

*Based on Special Education Pupil Count, April 1987.

The April 1987 special education enrollments broken out by instructional settings were as follows:

- 4,288 pupils (36.0 percent) received their individualized education programs in a special day class setting. Special day classes are self-contained classrooms in which pupils are enrolled in special education for the majority of the school day.

- 4,232 pupils (35.5 percent) were enrolled in resource specialist settings, and 3,159 pupils (26.5 percent) were in the designated instruction and services setting. These two settings provide individualized education programs to special education pupils who are in the regular education classroom for the majority of the school day.

- 243 pupils (2.0 percent) were enrolled in non-public schools.

Table 2 presents the enrollments of different racial/ethnic groups in special education as compared to their enrollment in the total district. Black pupils as a group were overrepresented in the special education program by 7.2 percent compared to their numbers in the district enrollment. Black pupils comprise a slightly higher percent of the special education enrollment than reported one year ago in the Annual Evaluation of the District's Special Education Program, Evaluation Department, Report No. 434, July 31, 1986. Pupils classified as Asian and Indochinese, as a group, were underrepresented within special education by 5.2 percent. Filipino pupils also were underrepresented in special education, but slightly less so than reported last year. A total of 294 pupils were classified as limited English proficient which represents 2.5 percent of the total special education population.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND
TOTAL DISTRICT ENROLLMENTS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS*

Ethnicity/ Racial Group	Special Education Enrollment		Total District Enrollment		Special Education Enrollment Difference by Percent
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Native American	51	0.4	423	0.4	0.0
Asian†	526	4.4	10,979	9.6	-5.2
Pacific Islander	38	0.3	611	0.5	-0.2
Filipino	396	3.3	8,760	7.6	-4.3
Hispanic	2,671	22.4	24,130	21.0	+1.4
Black	2,778	23.3	18,428	16.1	+7.2
White	5,462	45.8	51,365	44.8	+1.0
TOTAL	11,922		114,696		

*Data from Pupil Ethnic Census, 1986-87, San Diego City Schools.
†Includes Indochinese pupils.

Table 3 presents the special education enrollments by age groups. Pupils ranging in age from six to fifteen years compose 71 percent of the population. The increase of 148.4 percent (141 infants) in the birth to 2.11 year old group over the past year is significant. Infants now compose 2.0 percent of the total special education population. Expansion of the district's infant program through state and federal incentive grant monies has more than likely affected this rapid growth. One suspects that infants with more severe handicaps are likely to be identified early and served in special education. Consequently, increases in the infant population are likely to lead to sustantially more pupils enrolled in the severely handicapped program throughout the district within the next three to five years. The number of preschoolers (3.0 to 5.11 years) in special education has increased by 10 percent (93 pupils). The 18.0 to 21.11 year old group increased by 96.8 percent (211 pupils) over the past year. Pupils classified as specific learning disabled composed 40 percent of this older group; mentally retarded pupils composed 34 percent; multi-handicapped pupils composed 8 percent; seriously emotionally disturbed composed 7 percent; deaf pupils composed 4 percent; and, pupils within all other handicapped categories composed the remaining 7 percent. It is likely that the more stringent proficiency requirements required for graduation have contributed to this increase in the older specific learning disabled pupils remaining in school. Mentally retarded and multi-handicapped pupils may be remaining in school for community-based instruction and vocational training opportunities.

TABLE 3
SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENTS BY AGE GROUPS*

Age Group	Number	Percent
0 - 2.11 years	236	2.0
3.0 - 5.11 years	1,021	8.6
6.0 - 8.11 years	2,829	23.7
9.0 - 11.11 years	3,069	25.7
12.0 - 14.11 years	2,566	21.5
15.0 - 17.11 years	1,772	14.9
18.0 - 21.11 years	429	3.6

*Based on April 1987 Pupil Count.

The age distribution within each of the handicapping categories is given in Table 4. Different distributions among the age groups are noted based on the type of handicapped category. For example, infants in the birth to 2.11 year-old group are certified as multi-handicapped, deaf, or visually handicapped. Beginning in the 3.0 to 5.11 year old group, a more differential diagnosis of pupil's handicap occurs as noted by certification of pupils in each of the different handicapped categories. Distribution of pupils in each of the age groups within the more severe handicapped categories, such as mental retardation, deaf and hard of hearing, seriously emotionally disturbed, other health impaired, and multi-handicapped, tends to be reasonably uniform with the exception of a drop in the percent of 18.0 to 21.11 year olds. The uneven age distributions of visually handicapped and deaf-blind pupils between the different age groups may be due to their relatively small numbers within the special education population.

The percent of specific learning disabled pupils in the 6.0 to 8.11 year old age range is substantially higher (15.0 percent) than the 3.0 to 5.11 year old group, and the percent in the 9.0 to 11.11 year old range is 12.5 percent higher than the 6.0 to 8.11 year old group. Beginning with the 12.0 to 14.11 year olds, the percent of specific learning disabled decreases with each successively older age group; more than likely due to graduations, drop outs, and decertifications from special education. A greater percent of speech impaired pupils were within the young age groups (3.0 through 11.11 years old) with a 16 percent decrease at 12.0 to 14.11 years.

TABLE 4
AGE DISTRIBUTIONS BY PERCENTAGES WITHIN HANDICAPPED CATEGORIES*

Age in Years	Mentally Retarded	Hard of Hearing	Deaf	Speech Impaired	Visually Handicapped	Seriously Emotionally Disturbed	Ortho-pedically Impaired	Other Health Impaired	Specific Learning Disability	Deaf-Blind	Multi-Handicapped
Birth - 2.11	0.0	3.9	6.7	0.0	12.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	41.2
3.0 - 5.11	15.0	7.8	19.5	20.6	22.7	15.2	11.0	15.0	3.0	33.3	13.7
6.0 - 8.11	13.7	26.6	19.5	49.4	12.1	10.2	31.2	19.1	18.0	33.3	10.7
9.0 - 11.11	15.3	24.0	17.1	21.3	21.2	29.3	19.8	22.3	30.5	0.0	10.4
12.0 - 14.11	16.6	15.6	14.0	5.3	7.6	32.8	23.1	19.1	27.9	16.7	10.5
15.0 - 17.11	21.6	18.2	12.2	3.1	18.2	22.0	13.4	20.9	17.9	0.0	7.0
18.0 - 21.11	17.8	3.9	11.0	0.3	6.0	4.2	1.5	3.6	2.7	16.7	6.5
TOTAL	805	154	164	2,226	66	659	693	220	6,417	6	512

*Based on Special Education Pupil Count, April 1987.

Reports from the Management Information Services Office indicated that between September 1986 and June 1987, 197 pupils in the resource specialist program exited from special education. This represents 4.7 percent of the 4,201 specific learning disabled and mentally retarded pupils served in the resource specialist setting. This finding corresponds to the reported average (4.8 percent) of special education pupils returned to general educational programs from a survey of 33 large urban school districts conducted by the Board of Directors of the Council of Great City Schools in collaboration with Research for Better Schools (Special Education: Views from America's Cities, November 1986).

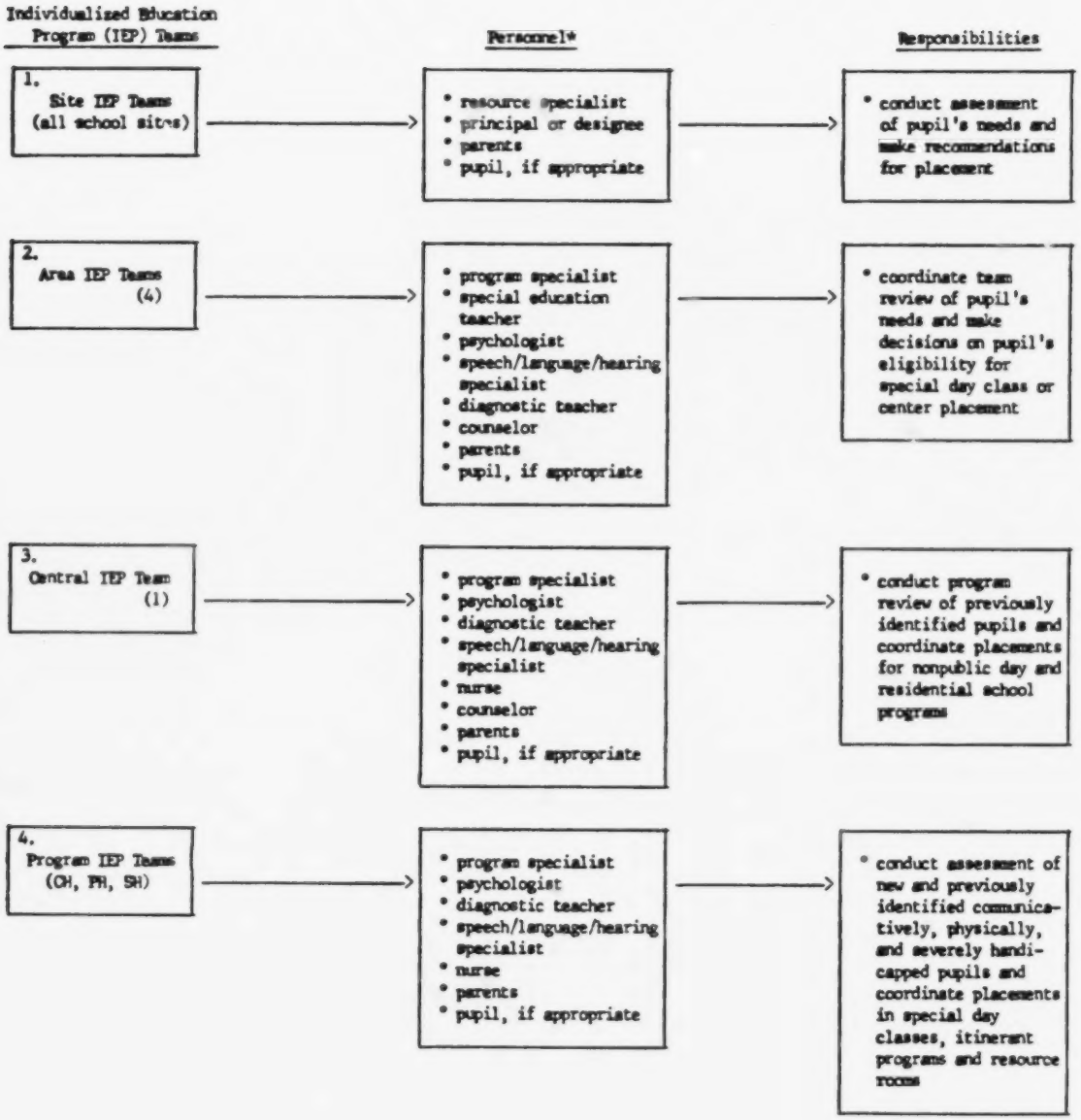
One hundred thirty-two pupils who exited from special education (67 percent) were boys, and 65 pupils (33 percent) were girls. The decertified pupils were most frequently enrolled in grade six (21.3 percent), grade five (17.8 percent), grade three (15.2 percent), and grade four (14.7 percent). The remaining pupils were distributed among all other grades except for grade one in which no pupils were exited. The average age of the decertified pupils was 12 years, 2 months old with no significant differences noted between boys and girls or between racial/ethnic groups. Of the decertified pupils, 45.2 percent were classified as White, 28.5 percent as Hispanics, 21.3 percent as Blacks, 2.0 percent as Portuguese, 1.5 percent as Filipino, 1.0 percent as Indochinese, and 0.5 percent as Asian.

The length of time that the decertified pupils spent in special education ranged from six to 90 months with a median age of 33 months. Pupils in the lower grades were enrolled in special education for a shorter time, on the average, than the older pupils. Boys were enrolled in the resource specialist program for an average of 35 months and girls for an average of 41 months. This difference was not significantly different. Among the racial/ethnic groups, Black pupils spent an average of 39.1 months in special education before exiting; Hispanic pupils spent an average of 37.9 months; White pupils spent an average of 35.3 months; and, the numbers of pupils distributed among the remaining racial/ethnic groups were too small to calculate meaningful results. The differences among the racial/ethnic groups were not statistically significant. In light of the findings (presented earlier) that Black pupils are overrepresented in special education and, on the average, remain in special education longer than other racial/ethnic groups, we may need closer examination to identify the key contributing factors for these trends.

Section B
Identification and Assessment Process

This section contains the evaluation findings regarding the perceptions that school site personnel held about the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and provide descriptive information about pupils referred to special education including indepth study of referrals to the seriously emotionally disturbed program. Also, the interagency collaboration conducted between the district and Community Mental Health and California Children's Services during the 1986-87 school year are presented in this section.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team process. Figure 1 depicts the different IEP teams, personnel involved, and team responsibilities involved in the IEP team process for 1986-87. The process is changing in 1987-88 due to the reorganization of the Special Education Department in spring 1987. The IEP team process was carried out as follows: 1) IEP teams operating at the school site level; 2) four area teams to correspond with the four school operations areas; 3) central team; and, 4) program teams for the severely handicapped, physically handicapped, and communicatively handicapped. The teams' overall responsibilities were to assess pupils eligibility for special education, conduct mandated three-year reviews, participate on school site consultation teams, and work with teachers, parents, and other appropriate persons during all phases of the assessment process. Typically, pupils referred to the resource specialist program were processed through the school site teams. Area or program teams processed pupils who required a more comprehensive assessment and special day class placements. The central IEP team coordinated nonpublic day and residential school placements.


Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams
Personnel*
Responsibilities
1. Site IEP Teams (all school sites)
• resource specialist
• principal or designee
• parents
• pupil, if appropriate
• conduct assessment of pupil's needs and make recommendations for placement
2. Area IEP Teams (4)
• program specialist
• special education teacher
• psychologist
• speech/language/hearing specialist
• diagnostic teacher
• counselor
• parents
• pupil, if appropriate
• coordinate team review of pupil's needs and make decisions on pupil's eligibility for special day class or center placement
3. Central IEP Team (1)
• program specialist
• psychologist
• diagnostic teacher
• speech/language/hearing specialist
• nurse
• counselor
• parents
• pupil, if appropriate
• conduct program review of previously identified pupils and coordinate placements for nonpublic day and residential school programs
4. Program IEP Teams (CH, PH, SH)
• program specialist
• psychologist
• diagnostic teacher
• speech/language/hearing specialist
• nurse
• parents
• pupil, if appropriate
• conduct assessment of new and previously identified communicatively, physically, and severely handicapped pupils and coordinate placements in special day classes, itinerant programs and resource rooms

*Team composition varies depending on individual pupil's needs.

Figure 1. Special education IEP team process.

A survey was developed to determine the perceptions held by school site administrators, counselors, and selected classroom teachers about the IEP team process as it operated in the district and to obtain suggestions for improvement. As indicated in the Evaluation Design section of the report, 75 percent of the surveys were returned. A total of 224 site administrators (principals and vice principals); 124 counselors; 207 special education teachers; and 152 general education teachers responded to the survey. All of the groups received the same survey. Five forced-choice questions were used to survey the respondents' understanding of IEP team members' roles and the assessment process. Results of these questions indicated that overall the respondents were most likely to have interacted with the psychologist, resource specialist, and school nurse to have processed referrals to special education. The majority of respondents (96 percent) indicated that they understood their own role in the IEP team process, and 88 percent indicated that the procedure for referring pupils to special education was clear. Table 5 shows the numbers and percents of administrators, counselors, special education teachers, and general education teachers who indicated that they had interacted with each of the different IEP team personnel.

TABLE 5
NUMBERS AND PERCENTS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY
JOB TITLE WHO INTERACTED WITH IEP TEAM PERSONNEL
TO PROCESS REFERRALS

IEP Team Personnel	Administrators*		Counselors		Special Ed. Teachers		General Ed. Teachers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Diagnostic Teacher	137	61.2	66	53.2	109	52.7	55	36.2
School Nurse	207	92.4	98	79.0	182	87.9	128	84.2
Psychologist	201	89.7	107	86.3	189	91.3	123	80.9
Program Specialist	168	75.0	65	52.4	131	63.3	24	15.8
Resource Specialist	215	96.0	113	91.1	131	63.3	142	93.4
Speech/Language	168	75.0	66	53.2	175	84.5	100	65.8

*Includes principals and vice principals.

Four forced-choice survey questions dealt with the respondents' understanding of the criteria and rationale used by the IEP team personnel to determine pupils eligibility for special education. More site administrators and special education teachers indicated that they understood the criteria used to determine pupils' eligibility for the different special education programs than did counselors and general education teachers. The criteria used to determine eligibility for the learning handicapped program were understood by more respondents than were criteria for the other programs. Listed in order of the respondents' level of understanding from high to low were criteria for the physically handicapped program, severely handicapped program, and communicatively handicapped program. On the average, 81 percent of the respondents indicated that the IEP team personnel clearly explained their rationale for determining pupils eligibility for special education with the highest rating (87 percent) given by the administrators.

Eighty-one percent of the administrators indicated that the consultation team process was used as a pre-referral intervention at their schools. They indicated that the resource specialist, school nurse, psychologist, listed in their respective order of attendance, were most likely of the IEP team personnel to participate on the consultation team. The diagnostic teacher and program specialist were least likely of the IEP team personnel to participate. District counselors, principals, vice principals, and classroom teachers were cited as also participating in the consultation team process. Comments made by the respondents on the surveys indicated that the consultation teams are widely used as a pre-referral intervention at the school site level. Many respondents were confused about the difference between the consultation team process and the function of a site IEP team.

Pre-referral resources used with pupils as rank-ordered by respondents are as follows: district counselor; basic skills supplementary assistance program; mathematics or reading lab teacher; Miller-Unruh teacher; and school nurse. Other resources that were listed on the survey but less likely to be used (or checked as not available) were the AGP resource teachers, Chapter 1/School Improvement resource teacher, and parent volunteers. Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the IEP team personnel spent the majority of their time carrying out assessments of pupils to determine eligibility for special education. Thirty percent of the respondents indicated that the IEP team personnel spent the majority of their time working with pupils already placed into special education. Fourteen percent indicated that IEP team personnel spent the majority of their time involved with preventive work before a pupil was referred for special education.

When asked if they preferred to use the expertise of the IEP personnel differently from the way they currently operated at the school sites, 405 respondents (57.1 percent) indicated "no," and 195 respondents (27.6 percent) indicated "yes." The remaining respondents (15.1 percent) either gave a noncommittal response or did not answer the question. Within the groups, the counselors were least likely to want to use the IEP team members' expertise differently, and the classroom teachers most likely to want a change. This information is shown in Table 6. One might hypothesize that while the respondents viewed the IEP team personnel as offering valuable expertise to the school site staff, a significant number of them (42.7 percent) wanted change as indicated through their "Yes" or noncommittal responses.

TABLE 6
RESPONDENTS' PREFERENCES ON USING IEP TEAM
PERSONNEL'S EXPERTISE DIFFERENTLY

Job Title	Yes		No		Uncertain	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Administrators	64	28.6	133	59.4	27	12.0
Counselors	25	20.2	73	58.8	26	21.0
Special Ed Teachers	61	29.1	118	57.0	28	13.6
General Ed Teachers	45	29.6	81	53.3	26	17.1
TOTAL	195	27.6	405	57.1	107	15.1

The respondents were asked to rank their preferred ways of using the IEP team personnel at the school sites. The responses varied among the groups.

- The administrators were most likely to assign participation on consultation teams as their top choice, closely followed by behavior management consultation. Consultation to parents was ranked third; counseling pupils ranked fourth; and, staff inservice ranked fifth by the majority of administrators.

- The counselors rank-ordered counseling pupils and behavior management consultation as their top two choices; consultation to parents as fourth; participation on consultation teams as fourth; staff inservice as fifth.

- The special education teachers rank-ordered participation on consultation teams as overwhelming first choice followed by behavior management consultation; consultation to parents; counseling pupils; and staff inservice listed in relative order of preference.

- The general education teachers ranked counseling pupils as their top choice followed by behavior management consultation; consultation to parents; participation on consultation teams; and staff inservice in relative order of preference.

The administrators seemed to rank their preferences relative to the needs of the entire school and meeting the needs of the largest numbers, e.g., participate on consultation teams and work in the area of behavior management. The secondary counselors and elementary classroom teachers indicated their top preference for pupil counseling and behavior management consultation. Interestingly, participation on consultation teams was not a high preference among these groups. The special education teachers indicated participation on consultation teams as their first preference. This group included resource specialists who participate regularly on the site consultation teams and may be requesting support and assistance from the IEP team personnel. In general, the respondents indicated they wished to utilize the skills of the IEP team members in ways other than strictly limited to assessment. Their preferences could be interpreted as reflecting a perceived need for greater consultation and assistance to site teaching and resource staff.

The final survey question, which was open-ended, asked respondents for comments and suggestions that they had for improving the operation of the IEP teams at school sites. The largest number of comments and suggestions came from the administrators and special education teachers. Counselors and general education teachers also made many suggestions. The respondents' comments and suggestions were coded relative to recurrent content in areas related to **organizational processes** and **organizational structures**. **Organizational processes** as related to the IEP teams were defined as the quantity or quality of the activities carried out to achieve the identification and assessment of pupils. The comments and suggestions were coded under organizational processes and subcategorized as decision-making activities, organizational complexity, communication with site staff, decision-making, and cooperation between IEP team personnel and the school site staff. **Organizational structures** were defined as the capacity of the IEP teams for effective performance. Subcategories under organizational structures were use of resources, overall effectiveness, and ability to meet pupils' needs. The respondents' comments in these two categories were then analyzed to determine overall effectiveness of the IEP teams' operation.

The respondents' comments categorized under **organizational processes** about the overall complexity of the referral process pertained to the amount of paperwork required, length of time involved, coordination problems between the IEP teams within special education, and inconsistent guidelines. Respondents in all groups (site administrators, counselors, and teachers) stated a strong need to reduce the amount of paperwork involved in the referral process. They stated that too many forms were required, and the forms were continuously undergoing change. Decisions about pupils' eligibility for special education or interpretation of district policy were perceived by the respondents as varying among the different IEP teams. All groups of respondents also frequently referred to the IEP team process as slow and confusing--particularly when pupils were referred to IEP teams other than at the site level, e.g. area, program, and central IEP teams. Representative comments coded in this category are given below.

> "Paperwork is far too cumbersome, and new regulations and procedures have complicated the system even more. Surely there is a way to simplify this overly complex system!! Too many man hours are spent on each IEP." (site administrator)

> "The special education department is very confusing. It needs to be streamlined. Too much paperwork to get a student referred - a very long process. These students have special needs and many times we need to act immediately. The system doesn't allow for this." (counselor)

> "The whole process of referring students is overwhelming. The process needs to be streamlined. Most teachers are reluctant to invest that much time in filling out forms." (general education teacher)

> "Consistent guidelines from above - constantly changing forms, procedures, and placements, etc. By the time one system is in place, another new one is started. Articulation is the pits!" (special education teacher)

Communication difficulties between the IEP team personnel and school site staff were frequently mentioned. The IEP team personnel were described as not communicating clearly and often enough with site administrators, counselors, and classroom teachers. They were often perceived as working at a cross-purpose with the school site staff. A site administrator stated, "It is imperative that the IEP team and site learn to work together. It may be well worth the time to do some 'team-building.'" One site administrator specifically stated that IEP teams are "not honest with site people and that a lot of game playing is going on." A recurrent perception was that the primary purpose of the IEP team was to block action and to prevent pupils from being placed in special education. Classroom teachers (both special education and general education) said that they were not included in meetings concerning their pupils and, as a group, they often felt out of the team process. Illustrative comments are given below.

> "The classroom teacher is a vital part of everything that the team tries to achieve. Conference times need to be scheduled to allow the teacher to participate - release time is vital if the teacher is to be involved. I as a teacher don't feel involved (with IEP process). I am informed, but not allowed to be involved!" (general education teacher)

> "I think teachers should be included in meetings that concern students enrolled in that teacher's class. As a classroom teacher, I see the need to coordinate what happens for students who are receiving special services with what I should plan for them at the classroom instructional level." (general education teacher)

> "We have had 0 students certified this year because we cannot make on-site decisions without the approval of the entire district area team. Our teachers, counselors, administrators, and nurse are very aware of our students' needs, through observations and parental contact yet, for some reason, not given the opportunity to assess or recommend!" (counselor)

Many counselors and classroom teachers indicated that they did not feel their observations and suggestions were used as part of the decision-making process to determine pupils' eligibility for special education. The IEP team personnel were perceived as making decisions based primarily on their test results. The test data were seen as more heavily weighted than information from the classroom teachers when determining if a pupil was eligible for special education. The teachers stated that the IEP team personnel did not spend enough time in classrooms observing pupils prior to assessment. Site administrators stated that the expertise of the IEP teams was of little value when team members did not listen to or value teachers' input. Several respondents suggested that, in reality, the IEP team members made very few decisions that included input from parents, counselors, or teachers. Illustrative comments in this category are presented below.

> "Listen more to input of site personnel. The input of site personnel should carry more weight than it does. Members of the teams should spend more time in classrooms if they are not going to take into account the site personnel's input." (special education teacher)

"It becomes frustrating at times when members of the (IEP) team make decisions about a child that they've never observed or worked with other than 1-to-1 testing." (special education teacher)

"All we really know is that an IEP (meeting) is coming up for a student. We are not told much about the process or how a decision was made." (general education teacher)

"IEP team (personnel) in general remain distant during meetings with parents. As a counselor, I have found myself being in an awkward position because the team (personnel) address tests and their results to each other and not to the parents. 'People' skills are lacking." (counselor)

Site administrators cited a need for earlier intervention by special education placement instead of waiting until a pupil was several years behind. They were concerned about how to help slow learners who did not qualify for special education. One site administrator stated that it has become almost impossible to certify new students for learning handicapped programs, and that many needy students are not being served as a result. Many administrators asked for more site control in determining pupils' eligibility for special education services. Another concern expressed by the respondents was that if a pupil was ineligible for special education then there were no other resources. One special education teacher said that special education was viewed as the "cure-all approach for different types of kids with behavior problems." This perception was seen as resulting in inappropriate referrals to special education by the teachers. Special education teachers spoke of pressure from site staffs to make pupils eligible for special education because of the general unavailability of alternatives and proper resources to meet pupils needs. In general, respondents in all groups expressed much frustration about how best to meet the needs of pupils with learning and/or behavioral problems in a timely and effective way. There did not appear to be agreement on whose responsibility it was and how to go about doing it. Several opinions offered by site administrators are presented below.

"Teams (IEP) should work cooperatively with the school and seek to find the best way to serve the student. Some students only need identification of their problems and suggestions to the classroom teachers as far as ways to best assist the child in class. I don't think the sole reason for testing students should be to qualify them for special education and if a child does not qualify is labeled as low average. Need to determine how the child best learns and work together to assist the child and give appropriate remediation strategies." (site administrator)

"Some students only need identification of their problems and suggestions to the classroom teacher about how to help the child. Streamline the process for more follow-up activities for students and faster service to students with serious disabilities." (site administrator)

The respondents' comments categorized under organizational structures described the identification and assessment process as being constrained by the lengthy assessment process including excessive documentation required for seriously emotionally disturbed pupils, itinerant status of the team personnel, coordination of schedules and inadequate time for follow-up and consultation. The amount of time required to complete an assessment was identified as the major problem area. Comments such as those presented below were repeated by administrators, counselors, and teachers responding to the survey.

> "The backlog in referrals and assessments has been a tremendous problem. It is now March - we have students that were referred in October that are now being certified. Students in need of services are not being served." (site administrator)

> "Need to get children placed early in the year. I've had one referred since September - still no action or communication from special ed." (general education teacher)

> "Speed up the process for determining student eligibility. One student I referred last August is now (March) being tested." (general education teacher)

> "My experience is that it takes many months for this process. There must be a better way." (counselor)

The amount of documentation to certify pupils for the seriously emotionally disturbed program was perceived to be excessive. One administrator asked why the IEP team personnel couldn't see what was so apparent to everyone else as a disturbed pupil sat in his office day after day. He made reference to seriously emotionally disturbed students who were disruptive in the classroom day after day and for whom supportive services were not available on site. Many administrators asked why these seriously handicapped pupils couldn't be processed more quickly and whether more consultation and support could be made available to classroom teachers as pupils were processed for special education.

The need for IEP team personnel, in particular the psychologist, to be more accessible on a regular basis was another area of concern. One site administrator noted,

> "The team at our site is extremely effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. However, the major problem is time. We have only 1½ days of psychologist time in our inner city school of 860 children. We have a dedicated staff. Still, many of our needs are not met due to the heavy workload."

Most administrators indicated that the psychologist assigned to their school was available for one full day a week or less. This was seen as inadequate to meet the site needs. Some administrators indicated that the psychologists came to their sites on an inconsistent basis or were scheduled for days when other support staff were unavailable. The comments that IEP team personnel needed to coordinate their schedules, interact more with site staff, guidance services, and the second language office and, in general, be more accessible were frequently mentioned. One special education teacher noted that the teams should be more visible and spend time consulting in a meaningful way. A common request was for the IEP team members to spend one day a week at the school site engaged in consultation and follow-up activities with the teachers. The respondents asked for more frequent information about the status of referred cases. One administrator stated, "weeks will go by before we're given any information about the status of a case. Area teams should be required to be in contact with sites more regularly."

Other recurrent comments coded in this category concerned the number of people involved in the assessment process, length of the conferences and IEP meetings, frequent changes in IEP team members assigned to sites, and need for more bilingual team members. One administrator commented that a recent assessment and IEP meeting at the school site involved as many as ten people. The IEP conferences were described as involving too many people and lasting too long. Administrators in particular made specific suggestions, such as the following, about more effective time management.

> "Too many people - too much time, often members have nothing new to add." (site administrator)
>
> "The IEP conference is too long...some of the team members seem to be prepared to stay for hours." (site administrator)
>
> "Team members making presentations should have a time limit so that comments are clear and to the point." (site administrator)

In general, the respondents indicated the presence of very serious problems with the organizational process and structure of the identification and assessment procedure, and they offered many comments and suggestions for improving it. The need to respond quickly to pupils identified as having learning and behavior programs was seen as constrained by a slow and complex referral process, excessive paperwork, continuously changing policy and guidelines, and lengthy meetings. Communication difficulties between the IEP team members and site staff were frequently cited. The general impression of many respondents was that the IEP team members did not understand their needs or include their input in the decision-making process. Many administrators asked for increased psychologist time at the school site for consultation and follow-up and more cooperation between sites and special education, guidance services, and second language staff to meet pupils' needs better. The survey was designed to elicit suggestions to improve the IEP team process. Although many problems were identified in the process, the respondents, as a group, viewed IEP team personnel as highly competent individuals who offered valuable expertise to sites. Their concern appeared to be that the current service delivery system was not making this expertise available to school-site staff in order to effectively meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and behavioral problems.

Student referrals. Resource specialists at all school sites and diagnostic teachers from the IEP teams were asked to collect descriptive information on all first-time pupil referrals to special education occurring during the November 1986 and March 1987. As indicated in the Evaluation Design section of this report, 82.3 percent of the surveys were completed and returned to the Evaluation Department. For the November sampling, surveys were returned from 90 elementary schools and 31 secondary schools. For the March sampling, surveys were returned from 93 elementary schools and 28 secondary schools. The data are described in terms of grade level, racial/ethnic groups, gender, and the types of interventions attempted prior to the referral to special education.

In November, 713 pupils were referred to special education. Of this total, 476 pupils (66.7 percent) were in elementary schools and 237 pupils (33.3 percent) were in secondary schools. In March, 645 pupils were referred to special education. Of this total, 428 pupils (66.4 percent) were in elementary schools and 217 (33.6 percent) were in secondary schools. The combined total for these two months was 1,358 or 1.2 percent of the district's enrollment. The number and percent of referrals to special education by grade level for each month are presented in Table 7. The distribution of referrals among the elementary school grades was very similar for each month. The highest percent of referrals was in grades one and two. The referrals declined in subsequent elementary grades with the lowest percent of referrals being for sixth graders. The distribution of referrals among the secondary school grades was similar in that the fewest referrals were at grades 11 and 12.

TABLE 7
NUMBER AND PERCENT OF PUPIL REFERRALS TO
SPECIAL EDUCATION BY GRADE LEVEL

	November 1986		March 1987	
Grade	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
K	52	7.3	54	8.4
1	132	18.5	122	18.9
2	120	16.8	113	17.5
3	57	8.0	58	9.0
4	58	8.1	54	8.4
5	67	9.4	57	8.8
6	34	4.8	30	4.7
7	37	5.2	52	8.1
8	38	5.3	27	4.2
9	28	3.9	41	6.4
10	51	7.2	24	3.7
11	25	3.5	12	1.8
12	14	2.0	1	0.1
Total	713	100.0	645	100.0

Approximately one-third more boys than girls were referred to special education. In November and March, 67 percent of all referrals were boys and 33 percent were girls. This ratio was fairly uniform for elementary school and secondary school and at most grade levels. A somewhat higher percent of boys was referred in kindergarten (75 percent of kindergarten referrals were boys in November and 78 percent in March) and in grade seven (76 percent of seventh grade referrals were boys in November and 73 percent in March).

Table 8 presents a distribution of the special education referrals by racial/ethnic groups for elementary schools and secondary schools. Hispanic, White, and Black pupils represent the largest racial/ethnic groups in the district and, correspondingly, the largest groups referred for special education. Pupils classified as White made up the largest percent of referrals at elementary and secondary school levels. Interestingly, a higher percent of White pupils were referred at the elementary school level than at the secondary level for both months. The reverse trend was noted for Hispanic pupils in both months and for Black pupils in March. When the percent of referrals within each of the racial/ethnic group was examined by grade level, it appeared that a slightly higher percent of the White pupils are referred in grades one and two than at other elementary school grades. Slightly higher percents of Black pupils were referred in grades three and four. Because of the small numbers of other racial/ethnic groups in the sample, comparisons were not be made for these groups.

TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRALS
BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS

Racial/Ethnic Groups	Elementary Referrals*		Secondary Referrals*	
	November 1986	March 1987	November 1986	March 1987
Hispanic	20.4	23.3	24.4	25.0
White	44.6	43.8	40.0	34.5
Black	29.0	25.1	28.3	29.8
Asian	1.1	1.1	2.9	0.6
American Indian/Alaskan	0.2	0.2	0.9	0.0
Pacific Islander	0.0	1.7	0.5	1.2
Portuguese	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0
Filipino	2.2	2.7	1.5	6.5
Indochinese	2.2	1.9	1.5	2.4

*Expressed as percent of total referrals for elementary and secondary schools.

One of the marked differences between the referrals made to special education in November and those made in March was the much larger number of pupils identified as at risk of in grade retention in the November referrals. In November, a total of 390 pupils (54.7 percent) referred to special education had been also identified as at-risk. Sixty percent of the elementary pupils who were referred to special education were also identified as at-risk and 54 percent of the secondary pupils were identified as at-risk. In March, a total of 27 pupils (4.2 percent) of the pupils referred to special education were also identified as being at-risk. All of these pupils were at the elementary school level.

These pupils were at only nine of the 93 elementary schools from which the surveys were returned. The largest percent of at-risk pupils who were referred to special education came from kindergarten and grade one. Recent evaluation findings (Promotion and Retention Implementation Study, Evaluation Department Report No. 463, June 30, 1987) indicate that the greater numbers of kindergarteners and first graders are identified as at-risk and retained than at any other grades. There may be a larger number of at-risk pupils in these two grades than other grades. On the other hand, these data would lead one to suspect that teachers are using referral to special education as an intervention strategy for younger pupils. Certainly this would be one way of obtaining a diagnostic assessment by a psychologist for a pupil having learning difficulties or behavioral problems. Other alternatives for such diagnosis and consultation are not currently available in the district.

Table 9 presents the various interventions reported by the resource specialists to be attempted with pupils prior to special education referral. The interventions are listed in descending order of the frequency with which they were attempted. Additional analyses indicated that elementary school pupils were reported to have received more interventions than secondary pupils prior to special education referral. Parent conferences were attempted as an intervention with 79.5 percent of the referrals. Parent conferences were used more frequently as an intervention with the elementary referrals (86.6 percent) than with secondary referrals (58 percent). The second most frequently used intervention was to change a pupil's seating with this being used for 54.1 percent of the elementary school referrals and 39.5 percent of secondary school referrals. Shortened or modified assignments were used as an intervention for 44.5 percent of the referrals, and the basic skills assistance supplementary program was used for 43.1 percent of the referrals. The basic skills assistance was provided as an intervention for 50.6 percent of the elementary school referrals and 28.3 percent of the secondary school referrals. Other interventions are listed in Table 9. All interventions except work with the pupil after school and change in school or modified day, the interventions were more frequently used with elementary school referrals than secondary school referrals. The data do not show the success of the interventions, the length of time that they were attempted, or who was involved.

TABLE 9
INTERVENTIONS ATTEMPTED WITH ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY PUPILS PRIOR TO SPECIAL EDUCATION REFERRAL

Intervention	Frequency*
Parent conference	79.5
Changed pupil's seating	52.1
Shortened or modified assignments	44.5
Basic Skills Assistance Class	43.1
Easier materials/change in AGP placement	33.2
Partnership or cooperative learning	32.9
District counselor	27.9
Conference with this or former teacher	24.9
Worked with pupil after school	24.2
Reading or mathematics lab/Miller-Unruh	22.8
Community agencies/resources	16.9
Changed teacher or schedule	15.4
Second Language Program	8.8
Resource Specialist Assistance Program	6.2
Change in school/modified day	4.9

The disposition of the cases two months following the referral was to be reported on the survey. Based on the responses, the following categories were developed.

1) Final decision reached including eligibility for special education services established, pupil found not eligible, administrative placement in special education, parents refused assessment or placement, and pupil moved out of the district.

2) Case still pending or incomplete.

3) Recommendation made to use alternative programs or approaches.

For the November reporting period, a final decision was reached for 275 referrals (43.9 percent), and, for March, a final decision was reached for 341 referrals (57.6 percent). Slightly over half of these referrals were found to be eligible for the resource specialist program, small group instruction, or had moved from another district with an active individualized education program and placed into special education. The final decision reached for one-third of these pupils was that they were not eligible for special education. A final decision was reached in nearly ten percent of the cases because the pupil had moved. In these cases, the resource specialists frequently noted that the move was, "to an unknown location." A small number (two cases in November and six in March) were closed because the parents refused to have the assessment or special education placement take place.

In November, 290 referrals (40.7 percent) were reported to be incomplete, and 209 referrals (35.3 percent) were incomplete in March. The reasons typically given were: waiting for psychologist's assessment; waiting to schedule the IEP meeting; testing was in progress; still documenting for severely emotionally disturbed program; and, referred to the IEP area team for more assessment. Other responses in this category were: planning to hold over the referral until next fall (March reporting period); conduct more screening before making a formal referral; or, continue to monitor pupil with classroom teacher or through the consultation team process. Additional responses pertained to reasons such as pupil absent due to illness or vacations, truancy problems, or, in several cases, the pupil was uncooperative during the assessment.

The final category of responses involved a recommendation not to refer the pupil to special education, but, instead, to try alternative programs and approaches. In November, alternative approaches to special education were attempted for 35 pupils (5.6 percent) and, in March, alternatives were attempted for 42 pupils (7.1 percent). The alternatives that were considered included behavior modification techniques, sheltered English instruction, basic skills supplementary assistance program, district counselor, redeployment for reading instruction, retention, behavioral contracts, opportunity school, volunteers for individual tutoring, referral to the gifted program, and referral to private agency for counseling.

In general, these data have several important implications. First, the IEP teams simply may not have enough staff to adequately respond to the large number of pupils referred to special education each month. After two months, many of the referrals were not completed (40.7 percent in November; 35.3 percent in March). Typically, the IEP staff members were unable to schedule or complete the testing. One would suspect a cumulative effect exists with waiting lists growing longer over the school year. As indicated earlier, the length of time required to process special education referrals was a major factor contributing to the frustration of school-site staff with the IEP team process.

A referral to special education appears to be used by many teachers as an intervention strategy for at-risk pupils. The degree to which teachers systematically try alternative approaches and interventions before referring a pupil to special education is not known. Possibly, as pupils are unable to keep up with the pace of classroom instruction, teachers try many different approaches and interventions at the same time ("shotgun approach"). It is not clear that the interventions and alternative approaches are planned, implemented, evaluated in terms of their efficacy, or coordinated among the various district programs and school sites.

Referral to seriously emotionally disturbed program. Additional analyses of the referral data were conducted in consultation with Polly Gillette, psychologist, to determine the process by which pupils were determined eligible for the seriously emotionally disturbed program. In November 1986, ten pupils were referred to the seriously emotionally disturbed program. Eight of the pupils were boys, and two were girls. Six were elementary school pupils, and four were secondary school pupils. The status of these cases was examined and followed-up through records review and conferences with special education staff during spring 1987. Fourteen pupils were reported as referred to the seriously emotionally disturbed program in March. Because of time limitations, these cases were not followed up as part of the evaluation.

Of the ten pupils referred to the seriously emotionally disturbed program in November, six were placed into the program and four were found to be not eligible for services. Of the six pupils found to be eligible, three were elementary school pupils (two pupils were fourth graders; one pupil was a first grader), and three were secondary school pupils (two were seventh graders; one was an eighth grader). One elementary pupil had been identified as seriously emotionally disturbed in another district, and, by March, the pupil had been placed in special education. All were boys. Four pupils were classified as being Black, and two as being White. All had fluent English proficiency. One of the elementary pupils was identified as at risk of in grade retention. All of the secondary school pupils were at-risk. The pupils were referred to special education by the school principal and classroom teachers at the elementary school level, and the school counselors at the secondary level. Previous interventions included parent conferences, shortened or modified assignments, changed pupil's seating, basic skills supplementary assistance program, modified school day, and district counselor. The secondary pupils were all referred to outside agencies for counseling. As of March 1986, the disposition of the cases were as follows below.

A. Elementary pupil referred to central IEP team. Explosive, aggressive behavior with frequent assaults on teachers and peers. Special education staff were in the process of placing this pupil in a private school within the city.

B. Elementary pupil was on modified day from January to March. Special education supplied the regular classroom teacher with aide until placement could be finalized. Scheduled to be placed into a seriously emotionally disturbed class by the end of March.

C. Elementary pupil with active individualized education program from outside district. Placed into special education in January.

D. Secondary pupil found eligible for seriously emotionally disturbed program IEP meeting held in February, and still awaiting placement at Darnall in March.

E. Secondary pupil found eligible and placed at Darnall in February.

F. Secondary pupil found eligible and placed at Darnall in December.

Three of these cases were selected for additional analysis. The evaluator in consultation with Ms. Gillette selected cases that were considered to be representative of referrals made at the elementary and secondary school levels. The elementary pupil (#B) was a Black male. He was a first grader who had been retained in kindergarten and attended two schools previously. In mid-October, he was referred to the school site consultation team as performing below grade level in all academic areas, displaying poor motor coordination, emotionally immature, and extremely active. The staff action plan drawn up by the consultation team was to make a referral to special education and for screening by the adapted physical education specialist. In early November, the parental consent for assessment was obtained. Assessment by the psychologist and school

nurse was completed by early January. The teacher made daily entries in a log briefly describing the pupil's behavior, e.g. "four temper tantrums today for the following reasons: 1) his chalk was not the piece he wanted; 2) he did not get a sticker for good behavior; 3) he did not win a reading game; and, 4) I (teacher) suggested that he go to the counseling center."

The IEP meeting was held in mid-January. The psychologist's findings indicated the pupil was functioning within the low-average range of intelligence and within normal limits on personality measures. Low self-esteem was indicated along with discipline problems. The psychologist specifically stated in her report that, although the pupil exhibited behavior problems, the testing did not show any significant emotional problems except low self-esteem and on some discipline factors. There was not a severe disparity between achievement level and intellectual ability. The pupil was found to be ineligible for the seriously emotionally disturbed program.

In mid-January, the pupil was placed on a modified day schedule in which he went home at 11:45 a.m. instead of the regular 2:15 p.m. dismissal time. The teacher's observations were recorded daily. Ritalin was prescribed for the pupil's overly-active behavior. The case was re-opened in mid-February, and another IEP was held in March. The pupil was found eligible for the seriously emotionally disturbed program and recommended for placement.

At the secondary level, the two pupils were seventh grade boys enrolled at middle schools. Both had been referred to special education, and one, a White pupil (#E), was previously enrolled in the resource specialist program for three years. The other, a Black pupil (#D), had been assessed for special education three years ago in another school district, but did not qualify for services. For the pupil who was previously enrolled in special education, the resource specialist documented modifications and alternative approaches attempted over the past two years. This appeared to be based on records review and included interventions such as private counseling, academic tutoring, modified schedules, and numerous parent conferences. He was also at juvenile hall, on probation, and received psychiatric treatment in a residential center. The parental "consent to assess" form was signed and returned to the school in early November. Assessment by the school psychologist found the pupil to be seriously emotionally disturbed and eligible for special education. The IEP meeting was held in mid-January, and the pupil was placed at Darnall in mid-February.

A memo from the school's head counselor initiated the special education referral for the second pupil (#D). Low academic grades, inappropriate peer and adult relationships, poor self-concept, and "strange" classroom behaviors, e.g. sitting under desk, over-turning wastepaper baskets, were given as the reason for referral. The parents' permission for the assessment was given in late November. The resource specialist completed documentation of modifications. The assessment was completed in December. The psychologist's report stated that the pupil had the ability to perform satisfactorily in school but was not doing so due to general inability to establish satisfactory peer relationships, pervasive unhappiness, inappropriate behaviors, and fears or symptoms associated with school. The IEP meeting was held at the end of February, and the pupil was waiting to be placed at Darnall in March.

Four of the pupils who were referred in November were found to be not eligible for special education or the assessment was incomplete. Three were elementary school pupils and included the two girls who were referred to special education. Interestingly, these three pupils were all from the same school. The boy was a Hispanic with limited English proficiency. In March, the school was waiting for an assessment to be scheduled by a psychologist who spoke Spanish. The pupil, a kindergartener, was reported to be on a modified day and continuing to have temper tantrums and display aggressive behavior. One of the girls, a Black fifth grader, had moved out of the district for a short period of time and returned. By March, she was reported by the classroom teacher as "hanging on" in the regular program. The status of her referral was uncertain. Possibly, more screening would be taking place. The second girl, a Black second grader, had been assessed and was found to be ineligible for special education. The mother was taking her daughter for counseling at a private agency following the recommendation of the school psychologist. The fourth pupil was a White tenth grader who had been in a psychiatric hospital for intensive care. He was found to be not eligible for the seriously emotionally disturbed program. Instead, he was placed into the resource specialist program and received special education services on a "pull-out" basis.

Figure 2 depicts the process followed in referring and placing pupils into the seriously emotionally disturbed program. Overall, this process follows the guidelines described in Criteria of Eligibility for Service: Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Students, Special Education Department, San Diego City Schools, September 1985. The sequential steps are given as follows: a) documentation of attempts to modify the less intensive class program; b) clarification of the presenting problem both educationally and psychologically; and, c) review of the presenting problem in light of student's failure to improve with alternative interventions and with regard to the severity of the problems which might warrant consideration for placement in a program for severely handicapped/emotionally disturbed students.

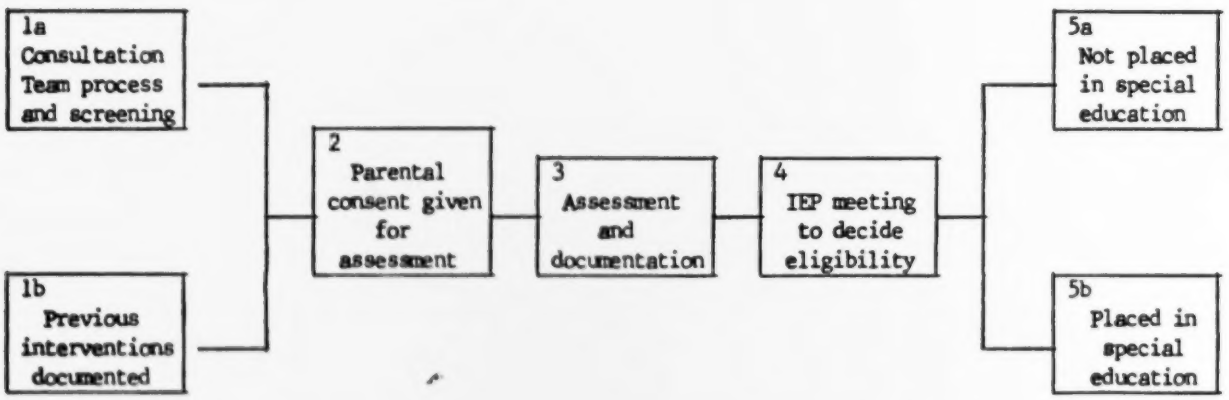


Figure 2. Process followed in referring and placing district pupils into the seriously emotionally disturbed program.

There were considerable variations in actual implementation of the steps for the three referrals. Documentation of previous interventions was available for each referral. However, the length of time, type of interventions documented, and the forms differed considerably among the cases. The consultation team process was used in the elementary school referral but not for two secondary school referrals. The assessment and documentation process officially began once the parents had given signed permission. The tasks of clarifying the presenting problem and reviewing the alternative interventions in light of their success and the severity of pupils' problems appeared to be the responsibility of the school psychologist in each case. There seemed to be much latitude allowed ("judgement calls") instead of strict adherence to objective test results. Factors such as an individual classroom teacher's difficulty managing pupils with behavioral problems or pressures exerted by a school-site staff (to place a pupil into special education) may play a significant part in the psychologist's decisions as noted in the elementary school case study (#B).

Review of the referral process for the three cases suggests that secondary school referrals are placed more quickly and with more reliance on historical information contained in the school records than are elementary school referrals. There appears to be considerable variation among schools and personnel both in the interpretation of the guidelines, identification of serious emotional disturbance, and the school site's need for immediate action. All of these factors likely contribute to cases being processed differentially throughout the district.

Interagency collaboration. The final question addressed in this section concerns the extent of interagency collaboration between the district and Community Mental Health and California Children's Services. Dr. Odia Ellison and Bob Calhoun participated in the San Diego County Task Force on Mental Health/Education Local Interagency Agreement during the 1986-87 school year. The task force consisted of representatives from the San Diego County, Office of Education, San Diego City Schools, local school districts, and community mental health. The task force was to develop consistent guidelines to coordinate interagency referrals as specified in California Assembly Bills 3632/882. The legislation states that pupils who do not appear to be benefiting from the district-provided counseling services may be referred to local community mental health programs. The type and level of related services is determined by the community health agency while the school district, through the IEP team process, determines the educational services.

The procedure followed was to exhaust district options before making a referral to community mental health. The referral is typically handled through the seriously emotionally disturbed program staff or central assessment team for special education students. Pupils in the licensed children's institution programs also are referred. By June 1987, 30 elementary pupils and 65 secondary pupils had been processed by the seriously emotionally disturbed program staff. Approximately 40 pupils were reported to be processed by the central assessment team. A number of other pupils in the licensed children's institution program received services under A.B. 3632. The interagency agreement was reviewed with a representative from California Children's Services specific to the provision of occupational therapy and physical therapy services. Pupils who need occupational therapy or physical therapy are determined eligible and served by California Children's Services. Adapted physical education is another means of meeting pupils' needs. The district currently does not provide direct therapy

services, but, instead, therapy specialists offer consultation to teachers through workshops, inservice modules, and classroom demonstrations with the heaviest emphasis on target populations such as the infant program and severely handicapped. During 1986-87, 59 students were authorized to receive direct occupational or physical therapy vendored to a nonpublic agency with 70 percent reimbursement from the state.

Section C
Instruction and Services in the Least Restrictive Environment

This section contains the evaluation findings related to the mainstreaming of special education pupils to provide instruction and services in the least restrictive environment. The evaluations were conducted in response to findings from the Special Education Audit conducted by Lou Barber and Associates, Evaluation Department Report No. 429, June 30, 1986 that serving more special education pupils in less restrictive environments such as the resource specialist program would be fiscally advantageous for the district and permit greater integration of special education into the total school program. Wang (1981) defined mainstreaming ideally as "...integration of regular and exceptional children in a school setting where all children share the same resources and opportunities for learning on a full time basis." While research findings on mainstreaming practices are generally inconclusive, there is an indication that mainstreaming works when regular education teachers are able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of all pupils including those with identified handicaps (Finn & Resnick, 1984; Stainback, Stainback, Courtnage & Jaben, 1985). Teachers' instructional practices, their attitudes toward mainstreaming, social skills of the pupils, and level of support from central office and school site administrators have been found to be important factors influencing successful mainstreaming of special education pupils (Budoff & Gottlieb, 1976; Guerin & Szatlocky, 1974; Ray, 1985; and Williams & Algozzine, 1979).

During the 1986-87 school year, two projects to serve special education pupils in less restrictive environments were evaluated. The first project concerned the integration of learning handicapped pupils enrolled in three special day classes at Perry school into the general school program. The second project involved the mainstreaming of seriously emotionally disturbed pupils at Darnall and Riley schools to comprehensive middle school and senior high school campuses.

Perry integration project. Perry Elementary School is located in the Bayview Hills Naval Housing area of Paradise Hills. The neighborhood consists of military housing for enlisted navy personnel with some civilian single family dwellings. The student mobility is high due to deployment of the military families. The enrollment was reported as 721 pupils in November 1986. The percent of racial/ethnic groups reported as enrolled at Perry were as follows: Hispanic pupils, 6.4 percent; White pupils, 37.4 percent; Black pupils 14.8 percent; Filipino pupils, 39.3 percent; and, Asian pupils including other groups, 2.1 percent (Pupil Ethnic Census Report, November 1986). A total of 27 pupils were reported as limited English proficient. The school serves kindergarten through grade six and is on a year-round schedule. The Perry staff included 33 classroom teachers, Miller-Unruh reading teacher, district counselor, school nurse, resource specialist, five basic skills supplementary assistance teachers (hourly), instructional aides and teacher assistants, guidance aides, health aide, office staff, vice principal, and principal.

As part of the Race/Human Relations Plan for the 1986-87 school, the Perry staff proposed to integrate comprehensively the special education pupils on the school campus. The plan was implemented in July 1986 when three special day classes composed of special education pupils identified as learning handicapped were transferred to Perry from Kennedy school. Information about the special education pupils who were enrolled during at least one of the first three quarters of the school year and interviews with the school site staff and parents were used to evaluate the mainstreaming of special education pupils at Perry school.

The integration efforts focused on pupils in the three special day classes. In Classroom A, the 14 pupils ranged in age from six years to eight years old, were enrolled in kindergarten and grades one and two, and, on the average, had spent six months in special education. In Classroom B, the 15 pupils ranged in age from eight to ten years old, were enrolled in grades three to five, and, on the average, had spent 22 months in special education. In Classroom C, the 20 pupils ranged in age from ten to twelve years old, were enrolled in grades five and six, and, on the average, had spent 35 months in special education.

There were 37 boys (75.5 percent) and 12 girls (24.5 percent) enrolled in the three classrooms. The distribution of racial/ethnic groups among the three classrooms was as follows: Hispanic pupils, 18.4 percent; White pupils 14.3 percent; Black pupils, 57.1 percent; and Filipino pupils, 10.2 percent. The percent of Hispanic pupils and of Black pupils enrolled in the special day classes was much higher than their representative numbers in the total Perry population. Review of the cumulative school records showed that the pupils were eligible for special education due to specific learning disabilities and several had qualified as mildly mentally retarded. Observations such as short attention span, needs a structured small group setting, and displays a poor attitude toward schoolwork were frequently noted in the psychologists' reports. Twenty-one pupils (42.9 percent) were receiving speech therapy, and 15 pupils (35.7 percent) were receiving adapted physical education. Three pupils were described by the school psychologist as having emotional problems, and two of these pupils were receiving psychiatric care for their problems.

The goal of the Perry integration project expressed by the site staff was to integrate the special education pupils into the general school program for at least 50 percent of the school day. They were to be mainstreamed at recess, lunch, and into the academic program. Additionally, activities to promote positive leadership and school citizenship were to be made available for the special education pupils. The special education pupils were to be included with regular education classrooms for field trips, off-campus activities such as the Old Town Program and sixth grade camp, visits to the bookmobile as well as instructional activities, lunch, and recess. Planning meetings involving the resource specialist, teaching staff, and site administrators were held prior to the start of the 1986-87 school year. Each special day class pupil was scheduled to participate in recess and lunch with a regular education classroom. The special education teachers teamed together for academic instruction so that pupils were placed into instructional groups by ability not grade level. Pupils were deployed to regular education classrooms for academic instruction as appropriate. The special education teachers in conjunction with the resource specialist recorded the number of minutes weekly each pupil was mainstreamed in the general education program for the first three quarters of the school year. These data were analyzed to determine the extent to which the special day class pupils were participating in regular education.

Table 10 shows the average number of minutes that pupils in the three special day classes at Perry were mainstreamed into regular education weekly during the first three quarters of the 1986-87 school year. All of the pupils received some mainstreaming time. The average number of minutes spent in regular education classrooms ranged from 235 minutes to 935 minutes each quarter for the group. Their overall mainstreaming time increased with each quarter from 360 minutes (22.2 percent of the school day) in first quarter to 431 minutes (26.5 percent) in third quarter. As the year progressed, the special day class pupils were spending more time in regular education with adjustments being made to accommodate individual needs. During the first two quarters, slightly more than 50 percent of the pupils were spending 300 minutes or less of their week in regular education. In the third quarter, fifty percent of the pupils spent 300 to 400 minutes being mainstreamed. By third quarter, on the average, the group was spending 26.5 percent of their school week in mainstreaming activities. Only three pupils were spending 50 percent or more of their school week with regular education. Two of these pupils were in the sixth grade, and one was in fourth grade.

TABLE 10
AVERAGE WEEKLY MINUTES AND PERCENTS OF
MAINSTREAMING ACTIVITIES FOR
SPECIAL DAY CLASS PUPILS

School Quarter	Average Minutes	Percent*
First Quarter (7/21/86-9/19/86)	360	22.2
Second Quarter (10/31/86-12/19/86)	390	24.0
Third Quarter (1/20/87-3/27/87)	431	26.5

*Based on district recommended 1,625 minutes of instructional time for grades one through six.

All pupils in the three special education classes were scheduled for recess and lunch with a regular education classroom. Pupils in the Classroom C (fifth and sixth graders) also were assigned to a regular education classroom for physical education. Approximately half of the pupils from the other two classrooms received physical education with a regular education classroom. In Classroom C, four pupils (18.2 percent) were receiving their mathematics instruction with a regular classroom; six pupils (27.3 percent) were receiving fine arts with a regular classroom; and two pupils (9.1 percent) were receiving health with a regular classroom. In Classroom A, one first grader was receiving reading instruction in the regular classroom. In addition, the sixth graders in Classroom C were scheduled on a rotating basis as office helpers, cafeteria

*t-Test = 3.33; degrees of freedom = 15; and, probability <.05).

monitors, and games coach on the playground. Their participation was largely based on a good conduct record, although efforts were made to include all sixth graders to some degree. Most pupils in the special day classes were receiving their weekly mainstreaming activities in non-academic subjects that allowed for increased social opportunities with nonhandicapped peers.

In addition to time spent in regular education classrooms, data were collected on the pupils in Classroom C (fifth and sixth graders) on the playground. The intent was to reward appropriate social interaction with classmates during unstructured time on the playground at recess. Special education pupils earned "checks" for misbehavior or "stars" for good behavior. The "stars" could be accumulated and used to attend a school movie. The special education pupils were encouraged to invite a friend from the regular education classroom. Over the three quarters, the number of checks earned by the special education pupils decreased significantly.* The number of movies that the special education pupils attended for each quarter was as follows: first quarter, 43 movies; second quarter, 86 movies; and, third quarter, 113 movies. By third quarter, all of the 22 pupils in Classroom C had attended at least one movie.

The participation of special education pupils in the counseling center program increased throughout the school year. Table 11 depicts the average number of contacts and number of special day class pupils who received reward and recognition, group guidance, and individual counseling during first, second, and third quarters. By third quarter, 40 special day class pupils (81.6 percent) were referred to the counseling center for recognition of good work. The average number of contacts for recognition was five times during third quarter. The number of contacts for reward and recognition doubled between first and third quarters. The number of pupils referred to the counseling center for group counseling activities ("growth groups") increased to 41 pupils during third quarter (83.7 percent), and each pupil averaged one contact per quarter. Time-out, self-control, and problem-solving activities were combined as an individual counseling category. A total of 13 pupils were referred for individual counseling activities during third quarter, and these pupils were seen for an average of four to five times.

TABLE 11
AVERAGE NUMBER OF COUNSELING CENTER CONTACTS
AMONG SPECIAL DAY CLASS PUPILS BY ACTIVITY

	Reward/Recognition		Group Guidance		Individual Counseling*	
School Quarter	Contacts	Pupils	Contacts	Pupils	Contacts	Pupils
First Quarter	2.5	27	1.5	29	3.7	3
Second Quarter	2.8	37	1.1	35	6.4	7
Third Quarter	5.1	40	1.1	41	4.8	13

*Includes referrals for time-out, self-control, and problem-solving.

On November 25, 1986, a communication workshop between special education and the regular education staff was scheduled at Perry to discuss how the integration pilot was working, ways to improve communication and schedules, strategies regular education teachers could use in working with special education pupils, and future directions for the project. The Special Education Department provided money for substitute teachers so that all of the Perry teachers could participate in the workshop. Four separate sessions involving the special education teachers and the regular education teacher to whom their pupils were being mainstreamed were held as part of the workshop. A summary of the issues discussed in each session was prepared by Lois Rocek, resource specialist, indicated the following:

1. Teachers felt that the integration project was working well; there was minimal trouble on the playground and in the lunch lines; upper grade special education pupils were being used as game coaches for kindergarten classrooms; new friendships were being formed; and, there was a willingness for all involved to help each other.

2. Things that needed to be changed listed smaller class sizes; scheduling for the fifth and sixth graders so teachers knew where pupils were all day; scheduling for third and fourth graders so that the special education pupils would not be on different lunches and recesses; assigning special education pupils partners in regular education; adding supervision to upper grade pupils when going between classes and to the buses in the afternoon; and, notifying host teachers when special education teachers assigned to their rooms are absent.

3. Participants in the workshops felt that the communication meeting was worthwhile and gave them a chance to voice their thoughts. As a group, they appreciated an opportunity to talk and interact with the other teachers. They stated that another communication workshop should be scheduled before school began in July.

Interviews were conducted with selected Perry school staff members to understand how the Perry staff was implementing the integration project and identify areas in which the project was successful or areas in which changes were needed. The actions taken by the site staff which appeared to be especially successful included the following:

- Strong support and leadership furnished by the principal for the integration project and when disciplinary action was needed for pupils;
- Initial planning conducted by the staff prior to the start of school;
- Central role taken by the resource specialist in coordinating the project and communicating with teachers;
- Communication workshop held in November; and,
- Willingness on the part of regular education teachers to include special education in their classroom instructional program and other activities.

The areas needing improvement were cited as more of a nongraded (ability) grouping of special education pupils, more teaming opportunities for teachers; smaller class size; aides or extra help for teachers; scheduling lunches and recesses is a problem, too many special education pupils with serious behavior/emotional problems; need more instructional supplies and materials for special education classes; and more psychologist time for the site.

Parents of thirteen pupils enrolled in the three special day classes were interviewed to determine their perceptions about the Perry school program. The names of five pupils from each class were randomly selected and, of this total, 13 parents were contacted. Ten interviews were conducted by phone, and three interviews were conducted in the pupils' home. The interview contained five open-ended questions, and lasted 15-20 minutes on the average. Review of the parents' responses in collaboration with special education staff indicated that the parents thought the integration project and "mainstreaming" were good ideas, but were not really familiar with how the integration project was being implemented with their children. Most parents indicated that they had sufficient contact with the special education teachers (one parent wanted more) and wished to hear more from the regular education teachers about what their children were doing. Most of the parents stated that their children had problems on the bus, but the situation had improved since a bus aide had been hired. The parents whose children rode the bus felt that the bus aide communicated with them very well and notified them of any disciplinary problems. Several parents stated that their child was doing very well this year. One parent mentioned that her son was on the student council and had never had that type of opportunity before as a special education pupil. When asked if they'd like to see changes in their children's educational program, most parents reported that things were just fine as they were.

In general, the Perry integration project was an attempt to mainstream special day class pupils into the general school program. By third quarter, three special education pupils were spending 50 percent or more of their school day in regular education classes, and, on the average, the group was spending 26.5 percent of their school week in mainstreaming activities. All of the special day class pupils were scheduled to have lunch and recess with a regular education class. Special education pupils had the opportunity to attend a school movie for positive behavior on the playground during the week. Their participation in the counseling center program increased over the school year. The school staff felt positive about the integration project for the most part. Areas needing change or improvement were the busing of special education pupils, more supervision as pupils passed from one class to another, communication about pupil's schedules and absences, and support such as smaller class size (both regular education and special education) and increased psychologist time. The parents who were interviewed were unfamiliar with the integration project for the most part, but they did support the idea of mainstreaming for their children.

Mainstreaming seriously emotionally disturbed pupils. Interviews were conducted with special education itinerant teachers to obtain information about seriously emotionally disturbed pupils who were mainstreamed into regular education classes during the 1986-87 school year. The role of the itinerant teacher is to provide mainstreaming opportunities for pupils including facilitating the return of pupils to full-time placement in regular education as appropriate. At the secondary level, an itinerant teacher coordinated mainstreaming of pupils from Darnall and Riley to various comprehensive campuses throughout the city. The secondary program mainstreaming activities were examined as part of this year's evaluation.

As of March 25, 1987, 25 seriously emotionally disturbed pupils in the secondary program at Darnall and Riley were being mainstreamed into regular education classes on comprehensive middle school and senior high school campuses. This did not include pupils in the Regional Occupational Program. The mainstreamed pupils were enrolled in grades seven through twelve with 72 percent of the pupils being in grades eight, nine, and ten. The younger pupils in the secondary program were seen as more willing to "take the risk" and participate in mainstreaming than were older pupils. The majority of pupils were taking elective courses such as art (five pupils), computers (four pupils), elective wheel including computer, science, cooking, art, and woodshop (three pupils), ROTC (two pupils), drama (two pupils), sports (two pupils), and English (two pupils). Other courses such as algebra, woodshop, chorus, history, and driver's education had one pupil each. Four pupils were being mainstreamed into more than one class. A site bus was used to transport the mainstreamed pupils from Darnall and Riley to their classes. Coordinating the bus transportation with school schedules were reported to be difficult. Seriously emotionally disturbed pupils who were interested in being mainstreamed were encouraged to sign up with their advisory teachers, or they could be nominated by school staff. Each pupil's request was reviewed by the school site staff at Riley or Darnall with the itinerant teacher to determine if the individual pupil could handle the demands of the mainstreaming situation.

Thirty pupils were mainstreamed at the beginning of second semester, and 25 were successful. The pupils who were unsuccessful discontinued with their classes primarily because the coursework was too difficult. Other reasons given were that the bus transportation made the pupil late for class or emotional problems were too severe for the pupil to continue with the mainstreaming. In addition to coursework, all pupils who were operating at the top levels of the behavior management point system had opportunities to attend assemblies and participate in other schoolwide activities on the comprehensive campuses. Concerns voiced by the special education staff were that the bus transportation took time away from the pupils' school day, and pupils who were mainstreamed for elective courses, might be at-risk of not completing specific academic courses required for graduation. The itinerant teachers estimated that 40 secondary seriously emotionally disturbed pupils would be eligible for mainstreaming in fall 1987 which represents an increase of one-third over this year. The interaction with school site staff at Mann Middle School to facilitate mainstreaming activities was described as particularly successful over the past year.

V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings. Key findings from the annual evaluation of the district's special education program are summarized below.

1. The April 1987 Pupil Count indicated that 11,922 pupils (10.3 percent of the district's enrollment) were served in special education. Pupils with specific learning disabilities comprised 53.9 percent of the special education population; pupils with speech impairments, 18.7 percent; mentally retarded, 6.7 percent; orthopedically handicapped, 5.8 percent; seriously emotionally disturbed, 5.5 percent; and, multi-handicapped, 4.3 percent. Other handicapped groups such as health impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, visually handicapped, and deaf-blind composed the remaining 3.8 percent of special education pupils.

2. A total of 4,288 special education pupils (36.0 percent) received their individualized education programs in special day classes, 4,232 pupils (35.5 percent) in the resource specialist program; 3,159 pupils (26.5 percent) in the designated instruction and services setting; and, 243 pupils (2.0 percent) were enrolled in nonpublic schools.

3. Black pupils, as a group, were overrepresented in special education by 7.2 percent compared to their representative numbers in the district's enrollment. This is at a slightly higher level than reported for the 1985-86 school year. Hispanic and White pupils were overrepresented by one percent each. Asian and Indochinese pupils were underrepresented in special education by 5.2 percent compared to their representative numbers in the district's enrollment. Filipino pupils are also underrepresented in special education, but less so than reported for the 1985-86 school year.

4. Seventy-one percent of the special education population was between six and fifteen years of age. The birth to three year old population has increased by 148.4 percent over one year ago and now makes up 2.0 percent of the total special education enrollment. The number of 18 to 22 year old pupils has increased by 96.8 percent of the past year.

5. Between September 1986 and June 1987, 197 pupils in the resource specialist program were exited (decertified) from special education. This represents 4.7 percent of the 4,201 specific learning disabled and mentally retarded pupils served in the resource specialist program. The average age of the decertified pupils was 12 years, 2 months.

6. The median length of time that the decertified pupils spent in special education was 33 months ranging between six to 90 months. Among the racial/ethnic groups, Black pupils spent an average of 39.1 months in special education; Hispanic pupils, 37.9 months; and, White pupils, 35.3 months. This difference was not statistically significant.

7. Seven hundred and seven school site administrators, counselors, and classroom teachers responded to a survey on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team process. Ninety-six percent of the respondents indicated that they understood their role in the IEP team process, and 88 percent indicated the procedure for referring pupils to special education is clear. Eighty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the IEP team personnel clearly explained their rationale for determining pupils' eligibility for special education. The criteria used to place pupils in the learning handicapped program were the most clearly understood among the respondents, and the criteria for the communicatively handicapped program were the least understood.

8. Sixty-one percent of the survey respondents indicated the IEP team personnel spent the majority of their time on school sites carrying out assessments; 30 percent indicated that the team personnel spent most of their time on sites working with pupils already placed into special education; and, 14 percent indicated that the team personnel spent their time doing preventive work with pupils. Forty-three percent of the survey respondents indicated that they wished to use the expertise of the IEP team members differently than the way they were now used. The counselors were least likely to want changes, and the classroom teachers most likely to want changes.

9. While the IEP team personnel are perceived as a valuable resource at school sites, the survey respondents offered many suggestions for improving the operation of the IEP team process. The ability of staff to respond to pupils' needs in a timely and effective manner was described as constrained by a slow and complex referral process, excessive paperwork, and lengthy meetings involving too many people. Communication difficulties, decision-making that did not involve site staff, and poor coordination among special education, and school sites, and limited access to the psychologist were frequently cited as areas for improvement. Many administrators asked for more site control in determining pupils' eligibility for special education.

10. Seven hundred and thirteen pupils were referred to special education during November 1986 and 645 during March 1987. Two-thirds of the referrals were elementary pupils, and one-third were secondary pupils. First and second graders made up the highest percent of referrals for both months. In November, 50 percent of the special education referrals were also at risk of in grade retention.

11. For the November referrals, a final decision was reached for 275 referrals (43.9 percent) within two months; and, in March, a final decision was reached for 341 referrals (57.6 percent). In 50 percent of these cases, the pupils were placed into special education. In one-third of these cases, the pupils were found to be not eligible for special education. In the remaining cases, the pupils moved out of the district or parents refused to proceed with the assessment or special education placement. A large percent of referrals were still not completed after two months (40.7 percent for November referrals and 35.3 percent for March referrals).

12. Review of referrals made during November 1986 to the seriously emotionally disturbed program indicated that the guidelines put forth by the Special Education Department were being followed. However, the actual implementation including the amount of documentation required and reviews of previous interventions and assessment findings varied. It appeared that secondary school referrals are processed more quickly than referrals from elementary schools.

13. The district made progress in implementing interagency collaboration with Community Mental Health and California Children's Services for related services in counseling, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. By June 1987, 30 elementary and 65 secondary seriously emotionally disturbed pupils, 40 pupils referred from the central assessment team, and pupils in the licensed children's institution program were receiving counseling services through interagency collaboration with Community Mental Health.

14. An integration pilot project for mainstreaming special day class pupils at Perry Elementary School was implemented during 1986-87. On the average, the special day class pupils were spending 25 percent of their school day in regular education classes. The older pupils were showing positive behavior on the playground. The participation of the special day class pupils in the counseling center program increased over the school year. The staff felt positive about the integration project. They stated that improvement was needed in areas related to communication about pupils, class size, and more team teaching. Parents interviewed were unfamiliar with the project but, in general, supported the idea of mainstreaming.

15. Two itinerant teachers coordinated the mainstreaming of seriously emotionally disturbed pupils at the elementary and secondary level. At the secondary level, 25 pupils successfully completed academic and elective coursework at comprehensive middle and senior high school campuses throughout the district.

Conclusions. The district's special education program appears to be operating within the state guideline of ten percent of the district's population. The largest categories of special education pupils are the learning disabled, speech impaired, and mentally retarded. The number of special education pupils under the age of three years and over 18 years has increased substantially over the past year. Future trends likely to emerge with these changing demographics are larger enrollments in the severely handicapped program over the next three to five years, and the need to provide effective post-secondary school options for special education pupils in the 18-22 year old range. The percent of pupils who exit from special education corresponds with national trends noted in Special Education: Views from America's Cities (November 1986). Black pupils, as a group, continue to be overrepresented in special education, and Asian and Indochinese pupils are underrepresented. The California State Department of Education, Directive to State Special Educators (12/3/86) specifically stated that intelligence tests are not to be used in the assessment of Black pupils for special education. In light of this decision, the procedures used for identifying and assessing minority pupils are likely to undergo change with a

greater emphasis on trying alternative approaches to special education (see Larry P.: Documentation and Recommendations, California Association of School Psychologists, January 1987). Whether these changes will result in fewer Black pupils being placed in special education remains to be seen. The factors contributing to the high number of Black pupils in special education may need closer examination.

While IEP team personnel are considered to offer valuable expertise to school sites, the referral process is generally perceived of as slow, cumbersome, and inefficient in terms of the length of time it typically takes to process referrals. A large number of pupils whose needs were not being met in regular education programs were referred to special education during 1986-87. Many of these same pupils were also identified as at risk of in grade retention. It is suspected that special education is often considered as an intervention for the increasing numbers of pupils whose problems need to be dealt with immediately. Special educators, on the other hand, serve as "gate-keepers" emphasizing alternative interventions to special education placement and caution in fair assessment procedures. The identification and assessment process needs to be streamlined and more responsive to pupils' needs. There should be consistency in the decision-making districtwide. Yet, the IEP team members should be able to retain their integrity as support staff, and ability to respond to legislative mandates and professional ethics and guidelines. In response to district budget reductions, the Special Education Department has been reorganized. Ongoing study is needed to determine if the reorganization has resulted in a more efficient identification and assessment process. A pupil-level database that is kept over time should be established to know which interventions are attempted, where efforts are being duplicated, and to identify factors that contribute to successful outcomes for individual pupils. The goal would be to identify the efficacy of different interventions, and findings should be aimed at developing a consolidated, integrated approach toward delivery intervention services and providing effective alternative approaches to provide optimal educational opportunities for all pupils.

Finally, the integration project at Perry school and the mainstreaming of seriously emotionally disturbed pupils are two programs attempted within the district to improve the interaction between special education and regular education. The district needs to recognize and disseminate information about successful programs and practices and encourage initiative at the school site level toward facilitating share responsibility between regular education and special education staffs in effectively meeting pupils' needs.

VI
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation findings and conclusions, the following recommendations for staff action are made.

1. It is recommended that the evaluation report be shared with district's Interdivisional Committee on Special Education.

2. It is recommended that the Special Education Director with the Evaluation Department and representatives from school sites, special education, Community Advisory Committee, and parents determine if the current reorganization of special education effectively addresses concerns raised in this report about the identification and assessment process. It is recommended that biannual reports of the findings be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services and shared with the superintendent and cabinet.

3. It is recommended that the Educational Services Division study the feasibility of developing a pupil-level database containing information on the types of interventions attempted with pupils who have learning difficulties or behavioral problems and on individual pupil outcomes as related to factors such as special education referral, in grade retention, CTBS performance, attendance problems, and suspensions. This database should be structured so that the efficacy of different intervention approaches can be determined. Findings should be used to develop strategies which consolidate intervention efforts; facilitate communication among school sites, departments such as Special Education, Guidance Services, Health Services, and Second Language; and, lead to a more systematic, integrated delivery of intervention services to pupils.

4. It is recommended that the superintendent and Board of Education disseminate information about successful practices and programs that effectively merge regular education and special education in order to recognize and encourage initiative and innovation among the school site staffs.

VII
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